

Commercial and Industrial Buildings,

M.M. Walker Company Warehouse

40 Main Street

Dubuque

Dubuque County

Iowa

HABS No. IA-160-BJ

HABS
IOWA,
31-DUBU,
13-BJ-

**PHOTOGRAPHS
HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA**

Historic American Buildings Survey
Department of the Interior
National Park Service
Rocky Mountain Regional Office
P.O. Box 25287
Denver Colorado 80225

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Site Location:

40-42 Main Street
Dubuque, Dubuque County, Iowa
DOT designation: Resource Site No. 5.14
Cadastral grid : SE1/4 NE1/4 S25 T89N R2E
USGS quadrangle: Dubuque South Iowa 7.5'
UTM coordinates: 15.692050.4707000
Lot dimensions : 90.4' x 113' : .23 acre
Lot description: West 1/2 Lots 16 and 17,
Block 1 of Dubuque Company Harbor Addition.

Present Owner:

Brown

Present Usage:

chemical manufacturing and supply business

Present Condition : fair

Overall Dimensions: 100' x 106.6'; 3 stories

Orientation : west

Architectural

Plan type : 3-story trapezoidal, open-space warehouse.

Description :

Foundation: coursed ashlar limestone perimeter walls with
tooled stone watertable.

Structure : wood frame with brick masonry bearing walls.

Ext. walls: common red brick laid in common bond.

Roof : flat composition roof with brick parapet walls.

Chimneys : all original exterior chimneys removed.

Openings : tripled, painted wood 2/2 double-hung windows
with decorative cast iron mullions on 2nd and
3rd floor front, with brick semicircular arch
heads (with stone spring blocks) on 3rd floor
and iron lintels on 2nd floor, both floors with
continuous stone sills; cast iron 1st floor
storefront, with plain iron channel lintel and
decorative iron columns; original fixed-sash
showcase windows replaced with wood siding and
infill anodized aluminum windows; single-leaf
corner entrance set in corner cutout; fixed-
sash basement windows on front infilled with
concrete block; 4/4 double-hung rear windows
with brick flat arch heads on 2nd and 3rd
floors and segmental arches on 1st floor, all
with stone lug sills; wood sliding doors at
trackside on the rear wall.

Details : corbeled brick courses on front parapet and
over heads of upper level windows; corbeled
brick pilasters; inset brick bulkhead panels
under upper level windows; cylindrical cast
iron column with ornamental fluting and capital
in 1st floor corner cutout.

Construction Date : 1894

Architecture Style: 19th Century Functional

Physical History : In the summer of 1894 Dubuque contractors Shields and Bradley built a pair of almost identical three-story commercial blocks along lower Main Street for two of the city's biggest wholesale grocers. The north building [HABS No. IA-160-B1] was built for the Schroeder-Kleine Grocer Company; this building immediately south on the corner of Main and Jones streets was built for the M.M. Walker Company. Reported total cost for the two structures: \$80,000. The Walker building featured four bays demarcated by brick pilasters. The first floor front consisted of large, fixed-sash showcase windows framed by an ornamental cast iron storefront. Shortly after its completion, Walker's warehouse was described by the *Dubuque Daily Herald* as a "handsome new brick building, containing four floors each 100 x 100 feet in dimensions. The building is especially adapted for the company's large business in perishable products, having a cold storage capacity of fourteen car loads. The building was erected by Bradley & Shields, from specially prepared plans furnished by Mr. Walker, and is complete and perfect in every detail. The shipping and receiving facilities of this house are unsurpassed. The Chicago, and Milwaukee and St. Paul tracks and switch run close to the rear of the building, enabling the company to load and unload direct from the cars. There are several large doors, so that the work of shipping and receiving is done at the same time. The company also has its own platform scales adjoining the building, as well as spacious platforms, substantial awnings over the receiving and shipping doors, etc. The entire building is lit by electric light. In fact the house is supplied with every facility and convenience for the active prosecution of its steadily increasing business." Walker operated successfully from this building for ten years before his death in 1904. After Walker's death, J.W. Hay took over as president of the grocery company. In 1921 the M.M. Walker Company was merged with Schroeder-Kleine, which expanded into this building from their own warehouse next door. When the latter company closed twenty years later, Dubuque Wholesale Grocers took over the building. In 1959 the Higley Chemical Company moved in, using the structure for storage and light manufacturing. Higley remains in the building today. Other than the alterations to the storefront, this building remains essentially unaltered.

Significance: Born in 1932 in Dummerston, Vermont, Marshall M. Walker came west in the early 1850s and operated a barge on the Mississippi River north of Dubuque. In 1860 he started a wholesale grocery business with a partner named Amsden. Nine years later Walker bought Amsden's interest in the business, renaming it the M.M. Walker Company; he incorporated in 1878 and reorganized with D.T. Smith ten years later. Walker's firm grew steadily from annual sales of \$150,000 in 1869 to almost \$1 million in 1886: Iowa's largest such business, according to one source. That year he employed some 14 men, with two traveling salesmen. From the home office on Iowa Street, Walker oversaw trade throughout Iowa and in Minnesota, Illinois, South Dakota, Wisconsin and as far south as New Orleans. Beginning in 1889, he maintained a retail

grocery outlet in the Bishop's Block [HABS No. IA-160-BA] on the corner of First and Main, and he eventually opened branch offices in Chicago and Fort Dodge, Iowa. As his five-year lease on the Bishop's Block was expiring in 1894, Walker constructed this three-story structure to house his growing volume of stock and function as the main office and retail outlet for the business.

In addition to his grocery business, Walker served at various times as a director for the First National Bank and the Dubuque and Sioux City Railroad, president of the Dubuque Board of Trade, an official of the Young Men's Library Association, founder of the Dubuque Tank Line, vice president of the Dubuque Jobbers' Association, manager of the Key City Barrel Factory, part owner of the Dubuque *Times* and Fourth Ward alderman, among his many positions. Described as "of striking personality, over six feet tall, broad in proportion, genial, easily approached, optimistic and enthusiastic, sympathetic, a staunch friend of the deserving regardless of politics, religion, wealth or official position, a liberal contributor to all deserving projects, a profound student of men, and a great lover of home and country", he cut a widely recognized figure in early Dubuque. This building is historically important for its association with M.M. Walker at his zenith. Architecturally, it is a representative and well-preserved example of the 19th Century Functional structures built in Dubuque's wholesale grocery and produce district along lower Main Street.

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